

and \$98 million to build. It is the second leg of what eventually will be a 42-mile limited-access road from Christiana to Dover.

Construction on the final segment, from south of Odessa to the Smyrna-Dover bypass, will begin in the spring and be completed about 2003.

Tolls for the newest section of the road will be collected beginning about Nov. 16.

Highway planners have been eager to build this transportation backbone since the mid-1980s to ease the flow of traffic on increasingly congested U.S. 13.

That road is frequently plagued with backups, especially in the summer as beach-bound motorists make their way to and from lower Delaware.

Many residents of southern New Castle County have been just as eager to see the relief route become reality.

"I just hope they all get on it and go," said Louise Carpenter, who lives along U.S. 13 south near Boyds Corner, one of the biggest traffic trouble spots on a weekend. "I'm so sick of traffic."

Odessa Heights resident Jeanette Reed said she can't wait to enjoy a quiet evening on her screened porch, which faces U.S. 13 north as the highway enters historic Odessa.

"I'm really looking forward to it. I never thought I'd say that," Reed said as she sat on the porch, with trucks rumbling by. "I used to like to sit out here and watch the traffic."

"Now, it's impossible to sit out here and have a conversation because of all the noise," Reed said.

Though some residents believe U.S. 13 will become a more serene road — the transportation department estimates the traffic count of 50,000 vehicles a day will drop to 20,000 — some business owners are worried.

"Sure, it's going to hurt," said Nick Kledaras, whose Hearth Restaurant has been a favorite stop for many travelers on U.S. 13 near Odessa. "If you're traveling through, and you're going 60 or 65

mph, you're not going to get off the expressway and come in here just for breakfast."

Kledaras said he might lose half his customers, but finds some salvation in the fact that the area is growing.

Bait-and-tackle shop owner Dan Foley is not happy.

"I've made a nice living for the whole family," said Foley, who runs Captain Bones on U.S. 13, south of Odessa. "I'm just hoping they remember I'm here."

Transportation officials say there isn't cause for alarm.

"Route 13 is not going to turn into a ghost road where you see one car every 20 minutes," Williams said. "But our goal is to turn [U.S.] 13 into a local traffic route."

One thing is certain: Beginning today, the face of southern New Castle County will change.

"Hopefully, it'll be great for the people in town, the county and the state," Reed said.